

SONNETS

SONNETS

BY THE
NAWAB NIZAMAT JUNG BAHADUR

“Love is not discoverable by the eye, but only by the soul. Its elements are indeed innate in our mortal constitution, and we give it the names of Joy and Aphrodite; but in its highest nature no mortal hath fully comprehended it.”

EMPEROCLES.

“Every one chooses the object of his affections according to his character. . . . The Divine is beauty, wisdom, goodness; and by these the wings of the soul are nourished.”

PLATO.

LONDON, W.C.
ERSKINE MACDONALD, LTD.

All Rights Reserved.

*Copyright in the United States of America
by Erskine Macdonald, Ltd.*

First published in 1917

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD, BY R. C. FRASER	9
NOTE ON THE HISTORY OF THE SONNET IN ENGLISH	
LITERATURE	15
PROLOGUE	21
I. REBIRTH	22
II. THE CROWN OF LIFE	23
III. BEFORE THE THRONE	24
IV. WORSHIP	25
V. UNITY	26
VI. LOVE'S SILENCE	27
VII. THE SUBLIME HOPE	28
VIII. THE HEART OF LOVE	29
IX. "TWIXT STAR AND STAR"	30
X. THE HIGHER KNIGHTHOOD	31
XI. IN BEAUTY'S BLOOM	32
XII. ETERNAL JOY	33
XIII. CONSTANCY	34
XIV. CALM AFTER STORM	35
XV. THE STAR OF LOVE	36
XVI. IMPRISONED MUSIC	37
XVII. LOVE'S MESSAGE	38
XVIII. ECSTASY	39
XIX. THE DREAM	40
XX. ETHEREAL BEAUTY	41
XXI. A CROWN OF THORNS	42
XXII. TWO HEARTS IN ONE	43
XXIII. YEARNING	44
XXIV. LOVE'S GIFT	45
EPILOGUE	46

FOREWORD

BY RICHARD CHARLES FRASER

THE following Sonnet Sequence,—written during rare intervals of leisure in a busy and strenuous life,—was privately printed in Madras early in 1914, without any intention of publication on the part of the author. He has, however, now consented to allow it to be given to a wider audience; and we anticipate in many directions a welcome for this small but significant volume by the writer of *India to England*, one of the most popular and often-quoted lyrics evoked by the Great War.

The Nawab Nizamat Jung Bahadur, was born in the State of Hyderabad, but educated in England; and there are some—at Cambridge and elsewhere—who will remember his keenly discriminating interest in British history and literature, and the comprehensive way he, in a few words, would indicate his impressions of poets and heroes, long dead, but to him ever-living.

His appreciation was both ardent and just; he could swiftly recognise the nobler elements in characters which at first glance might seem startlingly dissimilar; and he could pass without apparent effort from study of the lives of men of action to the inward contemplations of abstruse philosophers.

To those who have not met him, it may appear paradoxical to say that his tastes were at the same moment acutely fastidious and widely sympathetic; but anyone who has talked with him will recall the blend of high impersonal ideas with a remarkable personality which seldom failed to stimulate other minds—even if those others shared few if any of his intellectual tastes.

FOREWORD

A famous British General (still living) was once asked, "What is the most essential quality for a great leader of men?" And he replied in one word "SYMPATHY." The General was speaking of leadership in relation to warfare; and by "Sympathy" he meant swift insight into the minds of others; and, with this insight, the power to arouse and fan into a flame the spark of chivalry and true nobility in each. The career of the Nawab Nizamat Jung has not been set in the world of action,—he is at present a Judge of the High Court in Hyderabad,—but nevertheless this definition of sympathy is not irrelevant, for the Nawab's personal influence has been more subtle and far-reaching than he himself is yet aware. His love of poetry and history, if on the one hand it has intensified his realisation of the sorrows and tragedies of earthly life, on the other hand has equipped him with a power to awake in others a vivid consciousness of the moral value of literature,—through which (for the mere asking) we any of us can find our way into a kingdom of great ideas. This kingdom is also the kingdom of eternal realities—or so at least it should be; and those who in the early nineties in England talked with Nizamoudhin (as he then was) could scarcely fail to notice that he valued the genius of an author, or the exploits of a character in history, chiefly in proportion to the permanent and vital nature of the truths this character had laboured to express—whether in words or action.

But Truth has many faces; and scarcely any poet (except perhaps Shakespeare) has come within measurable distance of expressing every aspect of the human character. The Nawab could take pleasure in reading poets as temperamentally dissimilar as Shelley and Scott, Spenser and Byron,—to name only a few. Shelley, who was a spirit utterly unable to understand this world or ordinary homespun human nature; and Scott, who not only comprehended both without an effort, but who combined the practical and the romantic elements successfully in his own life. A devotion to Spenser, "the poet's poet," the poet of a dreamy

FOREWORD

yet very real and living chivalry,—Spenser who used to forget himself in his creations,—did not prevent the Nawab from understanding Byron, who never could forget himself at all ; and who, with all his vivid impulses of generous sympathy for the oppressed, is nevertheless generally classed to-day as a colossal egoist. (Unjustly so, for no mere egoist would have toiled as he toiled for Greek emancipation, in the nerve-racking campaign which cost him his life.)

In *India to England*—most characteristic of the war poems of Nizamat Jung—we see traces of the influence of more than one of the English poets he has read so lovingly. But the poem is none the less poignantly personal. The same may be said of the Sonnets here prefaced ; for although they are related to the sonnets of earlier poets whose work must be familiar to the writer, yet they are in no sense imitations, nor are they echoes.

“Poetry is the natural language of strong emotion,” the Nawab said many years ago ;—and if it may be asked why, holding this view, he has chosen such an elaborate (and, some people might add, artificial) form as the Sonnet, we can only answer that when an emotion or conviction is deep-seated and permanent, it becomes clarified, concentrated, and intensified under the stern discipline of compression within the arbitrary yet expressive limitations of a sonnet.*

One of the main reasons why the Nawab’s friends have urged the publication of his Sonnets, is that despite occasional imperfections (of which he himself is conscious), they form a consistent whole, and in their spirit and sentiment they are akin to some of the most noble utterances of the great minds and hearts whose words have been like torches to show what heights a strong aspiring soul can climb.

“The Will is the master, Imagination the tool, and the body the plastic material,” said a famous physician, who was also a practical

* See “Note on the History of the Sonnet in English Literature,” p. 35.

FOREWORD

man of the world ;—and the poet who identifies his will and imagination with the eternal truths, who looks up to the stars instead of down into the mud, may always, even in his weariest hours, cheer himself by mental companionship with the other resolute souls whose pens have been used as swords in the service of Divine Beauty.

Of all the most famous writers of Sonnets, it is Michelangelo whose words come back most vividly to memory as we read the Nawab's expressions of faith.

“Love wakes the soul and gives it wings to fly.”

*“All beauty that to human sight is given
Is but the shadow, if we rightly see,
Of Him from Whom man's spirit issueth.”*

*“As heat from fire, my love from the ideal
Is parted never.”*

*“Oh noble spirit, noble semblance taking,
We mirrored in Thy mortal beauty see
What Heaven and earth achieve in harmony.”*

Thus wrote Michelangelo of Vittoria Colonna (Marchioness of Pescara), “being enamoured of her divine spirit” ;* and though in the Sonnets of the Nawab, who uses what is for him a foreign tongue, the ideal is sometimes greater than the expression of it, yet the spirit shines out with a light which none can mistake. And whether the average man accepts or rejects the standards therein embodied, lovers of poetry will recognise that the Nawab, in his championship of a high and noble ideal, fights in the same army as Dante and Michelangelo,—neither of them cloistered dreamers, neither of them arm-chair theorists, but men who lived and loved

* Ascanio Condivi's “Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti.”

FOREWORD

and suffered amidst the turmoil of a world they viewed with wide-open eyes and unflinching minds.

The chivalrous ideal of an exalted and inspiring love can be rejected if we please ;—but let none claim to be manly because this ideal seems too ethereal. For it is by the most vigorous, most strenuous, and most commanding souls and minds that this faith in the Eternal Beauty has been cherished and upheld most ardently and resolutely.

September 29, 1917.

NOTE ON THE HISTORY OF THE SONNET IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

NOW that Italy holds such a brilliant place among our Allies during this the greatest war in the world's history—the war of chivalry (which is to say moral and spiritual right) against the arrogant might of the Prussian Octopus,—it is well to remember that it was from Italy the Sonnet first came into England. The word *sonnet*, in fact, is from the Italian *sonetto* (literally “a little sound”), and the *sonetto* was originally a short poem recited or sung to the accompaniment of music, probably the lute or mandolin.

Whether its birth should be attributed to Italy or Sicily,—or to Provence, the cradle of troubadour poetry,—is a subject on which the learned may still indulge in pleasant controversies. But in Italy, towards the end of the thirteenth century, it had already become a favourite mode of expression; and some forty years later, in a manuscript treatise on the *Poetica Volgare* (written in 1332 by a Judge in Padua), sixteen different forms of sonnet were enumerated as then in current use.

But despite the continued vogue of the Sonnet, and its association with the names of such masters as Dante, Petrarch, Tasso and Michelangelo in Italy; Ronsard in France; Camoens in Portugal; Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth and Rossetti in England—to say nothing of a host of minor poets, who, though one star differeth from another in glory, yet constitute a brilliant galaxy—it is remarkable that even now the average non-literary reader when asked “What is a Sonnet?” seldom gives any more explicit reply than to say it is “a short poem limited to fourteen lines.”

The rules for the structure of those fourteen lines, and the

HISTORY OF THE SONNET

labour and patience entailed in producing a poem under these limitations, are not always realised even by those who enjoy the results of the poet's concentrated efforts. The more successful a sonnet, the more the reader is apt to accept its beauty as if it had grown by a natural process like a flower. This, perhaps, is the best compliment we could pay the poet; but if the poet is one who boldly essays a most difficult and complex form, in a language which for him is foreign, then we should pause a moment to consider what it is that he has set out to accomplish.

Taking the structure first (though for the poet the spirit and impetus of the central idea must of course come first)—a sonnet on the Italian (Petrarchan) model must consist of fourteen lines of ten syllables each, and must be composed of a major and minor system, i.e. an octave and a sestet.

In the octave (the first eight lines) the first, fourth, fifth and eighth lines must rhyme on the same sound, and the second, third, sixth and seventh must rhyme on another sound.

In the sestet (the last six lines) more liberty of rhyme and arrangement is permitted, but a rhymed couplet at the end is not usual except when the sonnet departs from the Italian model and is on the English or, as we say, “Shakespearian” pattern.

Each sonnet must be complete; and, even if one of a sequence, it should contain within itself everything necessary to the understanding of it. It must be the expression of *one* emotion, *one* fact, *one* idea, and “the continuity of the thought, idea, or emotion must be unbroken throughout.” “Dignity and repose,” “expression ample yet reticent,” are qualities which one of our ablest modern critics emphasises as essential, and the end must always be more impressive than the beginning,—the reader must be carried onwards and upwards, and left with a definite feeling that in what has been said there is neither superfluity nor omission, but rather a completeness which precludes all wish or need for a longer poem.

How difficult this is for the poet can only be realised by trying to achieve it.

The earliest writers of English sonnets were two very romantic

HISTORY OF THE SONNET

and gallant men of action, Sir Thomas Wyatt, and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey,—both destined to brief brilliant lives and tragic deaths. They were followed by Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney and a host of Elizabethan poets, courtly and otherwise. But it is Shakespeare whose Sonnets (though not conforming to the Petrarchan model) show the most force and fire of any in our language until those of Milton.

To analyse the variations of the Shakesperian, Spenserian and Miltonian forms is, however, unnecessary to our present purpose, as the Sonnet Sequence we are now prefacing is based on the Petrarchan model. Strictly speaking, the Petrarchan sestet (the last six lines) should have three separate rhymed sounds ; the first and fourth lines, the second and fifth, and the third and sixth should form the three rhymes. But this rule is by no means invariably followed ; even Wordsworth and Rossetti often rhymed the first with the third, and the second with the fourth lines ; and sometimes used only two sounds,—the first, third, and fifth lines making one rhyme and the second, fourth, and sixth the other.

As already said, these liberties are permitted, for the sestet is not under such arbitrary regulations as the octave.

There are writers who keep all the rules, and yet leave their readers cold ; and others who are technically less correct, but in whom the vigour and intensity of emotion is swiftly felt and silences adverse criticism. The ideal is to combine deep and exalted feeling with perfect expression, and produce a whole which goes to the heart like a beautiful piece of music, and satisfies the mind—like one of those ancient Greek gems which, in a small space, presents engraved images symbolic of sublime ideas vast as the universe.

The Nawab Nizamat Jung has written in English several sonnets which we should admire even if English were his native language. But if any of us would like to form some estimate of the difficulties he has surmounted, let us sit down and try to express in a sonnet in *any* foreign language our own thoughts and beliefs. We shall then the better appreciate what he has achieved.

As, however, while the Great War lasts, few of us have leisure

HISTORY OF THE SONNET

for literary experiments, it will perhaps be best to read these Sonnets primarily for their soul and spirit. In melody and expression they are of varying degrees of merit and completeness, but in the inspiring ideal they consistently embody they rise to heights which have been scaled only by the noblest. In tone and temper—as already said—they are akin to the Sonnets to Vittoria Colonna by Michelangelo,—of whom it was written by one who knew him well, “*Though I have held such long intercourse with him I have never heard from his mouth a word that was not most honourable. . . . In him there are no base thoughts. . . . He loves not only human beauty, but everything that is beautiful and exquisite in its own kind,—marvelling at it with a wonderful admiration.*”

Here we see defined the temperament of the heroic poet, that inner nobility and exaltation without which mere technical skill can avail little in moving and holding the hearts of men.

This note on the structure of the Sonnet would fail in its purpose if it distracted the reader from the spirit behind the form ;—for the spirit is the life,—and few who read these Sonnets will deny that the spirit of Nizamat Jung is that of the true poet, ever striving to look beyond ephemeral sorrows up to the Eternal Beauty—now hidden behind a veil, but some day to be revealed in all its splendour and completeness.

R. C. F.

October 6, 1917.

SONNETS

PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE

*A*s one who wanders lone and wearily
Through desert tracts of Silence and of Night,
Pining for Love's keen utterance and for light,
And chasing shadowy forms that mock and flee,
My soul was wand'ring through Eternity,
Seeking, within the depth and on the height
Of Being, one with whom it might unite
In life and love and immortality ;

When lo ! she stood before me, whom I'd sought,
With dying hope, through life's decaying years—
A form, a spirit, human yet divine.
Love gave her eyes the light of heav'n, and taught
Her lips the mystic music of the spheres.
Our beings met,—I felt her soul in mine ;

REBIRTH

I

REBIRTH

TO me no mortal but a spirit blest,
A Light-girt messenger of Love art thou—
The radiant star of Hope upon thy brow,
The thrice-pure fire of Love within thy breast !
Thou comest to me as a heavenly guest,
As God's fulfilment of the purest vow
Love's heart e'er made—thou com'st to show e'en
now
The Infinite, th' Eternal and the Best !

I clasp thy feet,—O fold me in thy wings,
And place thy pure white hands upon my head,
And breathe, O breathe, thy love-breath o'er mine
eyes
Till, like the flame that from dark ashes springs,
My chastened spirit, from a self that's dead,
Upon the wings of Love shall heav'nward rise.

THE CROWN OF LIFE

II

THE CROWN OF LIFE

I KNOW not what Love is,—a memory
Of Heav'n once known,—a yearning for some
goal

That shines afar,—a dream that doth control
The spirit, shadowing forth what is to be.
But this I know, my heart hath found in thee
The crown of life, the glory of the soul,
The healing of all strife, the making whole
Of my imperfect being,—yea, of me !

For to mine eyes thine eyes, through Love, reveal
The smile of God ; to me God's healing breath
Comes through thy hallowed lips whose pray'r is
Love.

Thy touch gives life ! And oh, let me but feel
Thy hovering hand my closing eyes above,—
Then, then, my soul will triumph over Death.

BEFORE THE THRONE

III

BEFORE THE THRONE

WHEN on thy brow I gaze and in thine eyes—
Eyes heavy-laden with the soul's desire,
Not passion-lit, but lit with Heav'n's own fire—
I have a vision of Love's Paradise.
Gazing, my trancèd spirit straightway flies
Beyond the zone to which the stars aspire ;
I hear the blent notes of the white-wing'd quire
Around Immortal Love triumphant rise.

And there I kneel before th' eternal throne
Of Love, whose light conceals him,—there I see,
Veiled in his sacred light, a face well known
To me on earth, now, yearning, bend o'er me.
Heaven's mystic veil, inwove of light and tone,
Conceals thee not, Belovèd,—I know thee !

WORSHIP

IV

WORSHIP

HOW poor is all my love, how great thy claim !
How weak the breath, the voice which would
reveal

All that thy soul hath taught my soul to feel—
Longings profound,—deep thoughts without a
name.

If God's self might be worshipped, without blame,
In His best works, then would I silent kneel
Watching thine eyes,—until my soul should steal
Back, unperceived, to regions whence it came !

If my whole life were but one thought of thee,
That thought the purest worship of my heart
And my soul's yearning blent ; if at thy feet
I offered such a life, there still would be
Something to wish for,—something to complete
The measure of my love and thy desert.

UNITY

V

UNITY

WHEN I approach thee, Love, I lay aside
All that is mortal in me ; with a heart
Absolved and pure, and cleansed in every part
Of every thought that I might wish to hide
From God, I come,—fit spirit to abide
With such a soaring spirit as thou art,
Whose eye transfixes with a fiery dart
Presumptuous passion and ignoble pride.

Yea, thus I come to thee, and thus I dare
To gaze into thine eyes ; I take thy hand,
And its soft touch upon my lips and eyes
Thrills thy pure being, while it lingers there,
Into my heart and soul ;—and then we stand
Like the first two that loved in Paradise !

LOVE'S SILENCE

VI

LOVE'S SILENCE

WHEN through thine eyes the light of Heav'n
doth shine
Upon my being, and thy whisper brings,
As the soft rustling of an angel's wings,
Joy to my soul and peace and grace divine ;
When thus thy body and thy soul combine
To weave the mystic web thy beauty flings
Around my heart, whose thrilling silence rings
With Hope's unuttered songs that make thee
mine,—

Ah, then, O Love ! what need of words have we,
Who speak in feeling to each other's heart ?
Words are too weak Love's message to impart,
Too frail to live through Love's eternity.
Silence, the voice of God, alone must be
Love's voice for thee, belovèd as thou art.

THE SUBLIME HOPE

VII

THE SUBLIME HOPE

WHAT need to tell thee o'er and o'er again
What eyes to eyes have spoken silently
And heart to heart hath uttered ? Love must be
For us a hushed delight, a voiceless pain
Serenely borne ! Our lips must ne'er profane
Our inmost feelings,—lest the sanctity
Of Love be lessened in our hearts and we
Nought higher than the common path attain !

The common path were death to us, whose love,
O'erruled by Fate, from earthly hopes debarred,
Must look to Heav'n for sublimer joys
Than those which earth can give, which earth de-
stroys.

Our path is steep, but there is light above,
And Faith can make the roughest way less hard.

THE HEART OF LOVE

VIII

THE HEART OF LOVE

LOOK in mine eyes, Belovèd,—for my tongue
Must never utter what my heart doth
claim,—

And read Love there, for Love's forbidden name
Dies on my trembling lips unvoiced, unsung.
Nor sighs, nor tears—the bitter tribute wrung
From hearts of woe—must e'er that love proclaim
For which the world's unpitying heart would blame
Thy pity—though from purest fountains sprung.

Fate and the world, they bid wide oceans roll
Between our yearning hearts and their desire ;
Yea, lips they silence, but can ne'er control
The heart of Love, nor quench its sacred fire.
I must not speak ; O look into my soul—
There read the message which thou dost require !

“TWIXT STAR AND STAR”

IX

“TWIXT STAR AND STAR”

NOT here,—not here, where weak conventions
mar

Life's hopes and joys, Love's beauty, truth and
grace,

Must I come near thee, greet thee face to face,
Pour in thine ear the songs and sighs that are
My heart's best offerings. But in regions far,
Where Love's ethereal pinions may embrace
Beauty divine—in the clear interspace
Of twilight silence betwixt star and star,

And in the smiles of cloudless skies serene,
In Dawn's first blush and Sunset's ling'ring glow,
And in the glamour of the Moon's chaste beams—
My soul meets thine, and there thine image seen,
More real than life, doth to my lone heart show
Such charms as live in Memory's haunting dreams !

THE HIGHER KNIGHTHOOD

X

THE HIGHER KNIGHTHOOD

A TIME there was, when for thy beauty's
prize—

Hadst thou but deemed my love that prize de-
served—

What hope, what faith my daring heart had nerved
For proud achievement and for high emprise !

No Knight, that owned the spell of Beauty's eyes

And wore her sleeve upon his helm, had served

His vows with faith like mine ; I ne'er had swerved
One jot from mine for all beneath the skies.

That time is dead, alas ! and yet this heart
Is thine, still thine, with Love's high chivalry
And Faith that cannot die ; but now its part
Must be a higher knighthood,—patiently
To brook life's ills, and, pierced with many a dart,
By sacrifice of self to merit thee.

IN BEAUTY'S BLOOM

XI

IN BEAUTY'S BLOOM

AS when the Moon, emerging from a cloud,
Sheds on the dreary earth her gracious light,
A smile comes o'er the frowning brow of Night,
Who hastens to withdraw her sable shroud ;
And then the lurking shadows' dark-robed crowd,
Pursued with glitt'ring shafts, is put to flight ;
And, robed in silv'ry raiment, soft and bright
The humblest flower as a Queen seems proud ;

So when thou com'st to me in Beauty's bloom,
And on thy face soft Pity's graces shine,
Thou can'st dispel the heavy shades of gloom
From my sad heart, which ceases then to pine ;
And Hope and Joy their quenchèd beams relume
And gild the universe with light divine.

ETERNAL JOY

XII

ETERNAL JOY

TRUTH is but as the eye of God doth see ;
And Love is truth, and Love hath made thee
mine.

What though on earth our lives may not combine,
Love makes us one for all Eternity !
God gives us to each other, bids us be
Each other's soul's fulfilment, makes Love shine
Upon our souls as His own light divine,
An effluence of His own deity.

Why ask for more ? Our union is above
All earthly unions, ours those heights serene
Where Love alone is Heav'n and Heav'n is Love—
Where never comes the world's harsh breath be-
tween
Hope's fruits and flow'rs. Ah, why then earthward
move,
Where pure and perfect bliss hath never been ?

CONSTANCY

XIII

CONSTANCY

AH, Love, I know that to my love thou art,
And must be, in this life, a dream,—a name !
But be it joy or grief, or praise or blame,
I give thee all the worship of my heart.
'Tis not for Love to bid life's cares depart ;
Love wings the soul for Heaven whence it came.
Such love from Petrarch's soul did Laura claim,
And Beatrice to Dante did impart.

To thee I turn,—be thou or near or far,
And whether on my love thou frown or smile,—
As, in mid-ocean, to some fairy isle
Palm-crowned ; as, in the heav'ns, to eve's bright
star
Whose pure white fire allures the vision, while
Myriads of paler lights unnoticed are !

CALM AFTER STORM

XIV

CALM AFTER STORM

THOU hast but seen what but mine eyes have
shown—

Mine eyes that gazing on thee picture Heaven ;
Thou hast but heard what but my voice hath
given—

My voice that takes from thine a calmer tone.

Ah ! couldst thou know all that my heart hath
known,

While with Despair's dark phantoms it hath
striven—

From faith to doubt, from joy to sorrow driven,
Till rescued and redeemed by Love alone,—

Thou wouldest not marvel were my cloudless brow
O'er-clouded, were my aspect less serene !

Love smiles on Death, unveils his mystery
Of joy and grief, and Love bids me avow
This truth, with chastened heart and tranquil
mien,—

‘ Less pure Love's bliss if less Love's agony.’

THE STAR OF LOVE

XV

THE STAR OF LOVE

TIME'S cycle rolls—once more I hail the day
On which propitious Heaven sent to Earth,
Disguised in thy fair form, in mortal birth,
The Star of Love, whose pure celestial ray
Glides through the spirit's gloom and lights the way
To bliss ! I hail thy coming 'midst the dearth
Of the soul's aspirations, when the worth
Of hearts like thine had ceased men's hearts to
sway.

I greet thee, Love, and with thee scale the height,
That cloudless height where wingèd spirits rest :
Where the deep yearnings of the mortal breast,
From mortal sin set free, reveal to sight
That living Presence, that Eternal Light
In which enwrapt the eager soul is blest.

IMPRISONED MUSIC

XVI

IMPRISONED MUSIC

O H, had I but the poet's voice to sing,
Then would the music prisoned in my heart
(Panting in vain its message to impart)
Hover around thee, Love, on trembling wing,
To tell thee of the soft-eyed hopes that cling
To Love's white feet, the doubts and fears that
start
And pierce his bosom with a poisoned dart,—
The smiles that soothe, the cold hard looks that
sting !

But 'tis not mine, the soaring joy of Song :
I strive to voice my soul, but strive in vain.
Though passion thrills, and eager fancies throng,
Deckt in the varying hues of joy and pain,
Yet the weak voice—as weak as Love is strong—
Dies murmur'ring on Love's throbbing heart again.

LOVE'S MESSAGE

XVII

LOVE'S MESSAGE

WE will not take Love's name ; that little word,

By lips too oft profaned, we will not use.

From Nature's best and loveliest we will choose

Fit symbols for Love's message ; like a bird,—

Whose warbled love-notes by its mate are heard

In greenwood glade,—shalt thou in strains profuse

The imprisoned music of thy heart unloose,

While my heart's love is by sweet flow'rs averred.

Then take, O take these fresh-awakened flowers,

The symbols of my love, and keep them near,

Where they may feel thy breath and touch thy hand ;

Then sing thy songs to me,—in silver showers

Pour forth thine eager soul, and I shall hear ;

Ah, thus will Love Love's message understand !

ECSTASY

XVIII

ECSTASY

THE Nightingale upon the Rose's breast
Warbling her tale of life-long sorrow lies,
Till in love's trancèd ecstasy her eyes
Close and her throbbing heart is set at rest ;
For, to the yielding flow'r her bosom prest,
Death steals upon her in the sweet disguise
Of crownèd love and brings what life denies,—
A mingling of the souls,—Love's eager quest !

Thus let my heart against thy heart repose,
Sigh forth its life in one delicious sigh,
Then drink new life from out thy balmy breath ;
Thus in love's languor let our eyelids close,
And let our blended souls enchanted lie,
And dream of joy beyond the gates of death.

THE DREAM

XIX

THE DREAM

WAS it a dream, when, through the spirit's
gloom,

I saw the yearning face of Beauty shine—
Soft in its human aspect, though divine,
Pleading for human love, though armed with doom ?
And was it but a dream, that faint perfume,
Blent of loose tress and soft lips joined to mine,
Those fair white arms that did my neck entwine,
That neck's sweet warmth, that smooth cheek's
floral bloom ?

Ah ! was it true, or was it but a dream
Of bliss that scarce to mortal hearts is given ?
Ah ! was it thou, Belovèd, or some bright
Phantom of thee that made thy presence seem,
Rich with the warmth of Life, the light of Heaven,
To hover o'er the realms where both unite ?

ETHEREAL BEAUTY

XX

ETHEREAL BEAUTY

NAY, it was thou, when the fair Evening Star
Leaned on the purple bosom of the West ;
'Twas thou, when o'er the far hills' frowning crest
Fell the soft beams of Cynthia's silv'ry car :
Thyself—than stars and moonbeams fairer far—
A vision in ethereal beauty drest !
But, when thy head drooped flow'r-like on my
breast,
Then did no word our souls' communion mar :

Love spake to love without a sign or glance,
And heart to heart its inmost depth revealed
In the deep thrilling silence of that trance,
Till earth and earthly being ceased to be,
And our blent souls at that high altar kneeled
Whence Love doth gaze upon Eternity !

A CROWN OF THORNS

XXI

A CROWN OF THORNS

THERE was a crown of thorns upon the head
 Of Love, when he across my threshold came.
I knew the sign and did not ask his name,
But took him to my heart, although he said,
‘ The soul’s dumb agonies, the tears unshed
That sear the heart, th’ injustice and the blame
Of the harsh world,—God wills that I should claim
Through these immortal Life when Hope is dead.’

I took him to my heart and clasped him close,
E’en though his thorns did make my bosom bleed.
Then from the very core of pain arose
A joy that seemed to be the utmost need
Of my worn soul ! Love whispered, ‘ *This* the meed
Of hearts that keep their faith amidst Love’s woes.’

TWO HEARTS IN ONE

XXII

TWO HEARTS IN ONE

TWO hearts made one by Love that cannot die
Whatever life may bring, shall never part ;
In life they're one, and e'en in death one heart !
Are we not such, Belovèd, thou and I ?
Ah, then, why mourn that 'neath another sky,
Far from these longing arms and eyes thou art ?
I clasp thee still, and lo ! thy lips impart
New life to me as in the days gone by.

I feel thy heart in mine,—our hopes and fears,
Like music's wedded notes, together flow ;
Our sighs the same, the same our smiles and tears,—
The selfsame bliss is ours, the selfsame woe.
For Love no weary leagues, no ling'ring years—
Two hearts in one nor time nor distance know.

YEARNING

XXIII

YEARNING

THE night is sweet: thy breath is in the air,
I feel it on my face; thy tender eyes
Look love upon me from yon starry skies!
They bring to me, those glancing moonbeams fair,
The shine and ripple of thy silken hair.
And in the silent whispers and the sighs
That from the throbbing heart of Nature rise,
I hear thee, feel thee,—own thy presence there.

Ah, fond deceit!—too soon the heart, unblest,
Unsated, turns from these illusive charms
Back to the haunting dream of heav'n once known:
It pines for those soft eyes, that throbbing breast,
Those sweet life-giving lips, those circling arms—
The breath, the touch, the warmth of Beauty flown.

LOVE'S GIFT

XXIV

LOVE'S GIFT

I'M far from thee, yet oft our spirits meet :
We share the longings of each other's breast,
And all our joys and sorrows are confest
As though our lips did love's fond tale repeat.
Ah ! then thine eyes send forth, mine eyes to greet,
Glances in which thy whole soul is exprest,
Then, like some song-bird flutt'ring in its nest,
I hear thy heart in pulsing cadence beat.

I know its music and I know its thought ;
My heart to it th' unuttered words supplies ;
I listen to the thrilling melody
Until my soul its subtle tone hath caught.
And then I take it as Love's gift,—it lies
Imprisoned in my own weak poesy !

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

FROM out the golden dawn of vanished years
She glides into my dreams, a form divine
Of light and love, to soothe the thoughts that pine
For what has been, to stem the tide of tears
That inward flows upon the heart and sears
Its inmost core. Her countenance benign,
Where Love and Pity's chastened graces shine,
Reflects the hallowed light of other spheres.

Then to my anguished soul, with care outworn,
Comes, like a strain on aerial wings upborne,
This message from her soul :—‘ *Bid sorrow cease ;*
Love dies not ;—’tis th’ immortal life above.
And chastened souls, that win eternal peace
Through earthly suff’ring, know that Heav’n is Love !’